Note that blank pages found in the original document have been deleted and maps have been rotated to make viewing easier

SUPERMARKET ACCESS IN CAMBRIDGE

A Report to Cambridge City Council
Community Development Department
December 19, 1994

SUPERMARKET ACCESS IN CAMBRIDGE

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Executive Summary

The following report focuses on ways to ensure adequate access to a full-service, affordable supermarket for all Cambridge residents. The loss of the Stop and Shop stores in North Cambridge and Cambridgeport, as well as the concerns about the commitment of Purity Supreme to remain in Central Square, have highlighted the importance of supermarkets to the vitality of the City. This report addresses three basic questions:

I. Which areas of the city lack adequate access to full service supermarkets? II. What do

supermarkets need in order to locate a store in these neighborhoods?

III. What can the City do to improve food access, retain existing markets, and, in particular, to encourage the siting of new markets?

I. Access to Food **in** Cambridge

Supermarkets are critical parts of a food distribution network running from convenience and "Mom & Pop" stores to neighborhood markets and specialty stores. While each of these stores has an important role to fulfill, supermarkets are pivotal, given their ability to provide a greater variety of foods at lower cost. Indeed, consumers spend 75% of their food dollars at supermarkets.

Most of the existing full-service supermarkets are located on the edges of the City. ("Full-service" refers to stores with a wide enough range of products at affordable prices to allow consumers to buy a weeks worth of groceries at one time.) These stores are the Star Markets at Porter Square, Mt. Auburn Street, Twin City Mall and Beacon St., as well as Johnny's Foodmaster/Beacon St., the Market Basket/Somerville Ave. and the Stop and Shop in Watertown.

Are Cambridge residents underserved by existing supermarkets? Two general industry standards of accessibility to a supermarket are driving distance (generally two miles) and walking distance (generally one-half of a mile). Using only the first standard, a driving distance of two miles, there are virtually no underserved neighborhoods in the City. However, this measure clearly does not take into account the critical fact that many households in Cambridge, particularly elderly and lower-income families, do not have cars. Therefore, the second standard, which assumes walking distance of one-half of a mile, is an extremely relevant one. Taking into account which neighborhoods have the lowest rates of car ownership along with no supermarket located in a walking distance of one-half of a mile, underserved neighborhoods become clear.

By these measures, portions of Riverside, Cambridgeport and Wellington-Harrington stand out as neighborhoods lacking access to an affordable full service market. Riverside and Cambridgeport in particular have been greatly impacted by the loss of the Stop and Shop store on Memorial Drive. For many of these residents, access to full-service supermarkets is now limited to the Purity Supreme in Central Square. Though somewhat limited in terms of size and thus product variety, Purity Supreme plays a critical role in providing food to the neighborhoods surrounding Central Square. Other city residents also lack access to full service markets. In particular, lower income, careless residents in portions of North Cambridge and Neighborhood 9 face some disadvantages. In North Cambridge, the opening of Bread and Circus in the old Stop and Shop site has somewhat mitigated the access issue. It is clear , however, that Bread and Circus prices are at the high end of range and that its product selection does not provide the variety many in North Cambridge desire.

II. Requirements of Supermarket Operators

The area's major supermarkets are all relatively large (approximately 20-40,000 square feet) and are located on sites of 2-4 acres. The siting of these supermarkets reflect certain common requirements which are necessary for the success of most larger markets. These include a site large enough for the store and for parking spaces, adequate truck access, areas for loading and unloading and relatively high visibility. Not surprisingly, the industry has identified a lack of parcels of adequate size and location available for supermarket development and difficulties in securing enough parking spaces under the parking freeze as major barriers to siting a store in Cambridge.

Virtually every major supermarket chain in the region and a number of smaller independent markets with whom the Community Development Department (C.D.D.) has had conversations have indicated that Cambridge in general an extremely strong market; the demographics and overall density of the City contribute to its appeal as an attractive underserved market for food stores. Moreover, Cambridgeport/Riverside, as well as North Cambridge, are seen as able to support a full-service market. Preliminary market analysis by C.D.D. staff confirms these views.

However, industry sources do not view the availability of public financing, 121A tax agreements or other public incentives, such as land takings, as a factor crucial to siting markets in Cambridge. The perception that the process related to siting is extremely difficult and unpredictable is of real concern to the supermarket industry .The lack of regulatory certainty and the lack of sites were cited as a barrier to the development of new markets.

In summary , the industry considers Cambridge an underserved market which can accommodate additional stores. While the standard supermarket, at a minimum of 40,000 square feet, would need a site of three to four acres, a few operators have indicated that, given the right combination of site and cost, a store as small as 15-20,000 sf is feasible. Such a store would require a site of 1 -2 acres.

III. What the City Can Do

Given operators' concerns with site availability and uncertainties in the public process, this report provides an inventory of possible sites and considers zoning and other regulatory approaches to facilitate supermarket siting. It analyses 10 sites in Cambridgeport, Riverside, Area 4 and North Cambridge which meet minimal size requirements for supermarket development The analysis includes the permissibility of a supermarket under present zoning, either as-of-right or through a variance or zoning change. These processes are considered problematic by many in the supermarket industry because of the time and expense involved and the unpredictability of the outcome. The report provides alternative zoning suggestions which might make siting easier but involve other tradeoffs for the city.

The report also examines strategies adopted by other city governments and community organizations who have taken an active role in siting or developing supermarkets. In many cases their experiences cannot be applied directly to Cambridge, as their higher poverty rates, crime problems and levels of physical deterioration demand a greater degree of public investment to compensate for private market conditions. The record of public involvement in developing markets has been mixed, but it suggests that the right combination of private sector expertise and public sector cooperation can prove successful.

While our primary focus has been on attracting a new supermarket, this report also notes alternate means for increasing food access for underserved residents and improving the quality of service by existing markets. Among the models of alternate food distribution discussed are food cooperatives (such as the Harvest Cooperative Supermarket), food buying clubs and public markets. Access can also be improved via transportation aids such as delivery services, shuttle services, taxicabs and carpooling. Currently, the Department of Human Service Programs, as well as Stop and Shop, provide some shuttle service for elders to area grocery stores. Finally, techniques for improving service are suggested. These include forming resident committees to work with store operators to improve product mix, increase community outreach, and other enhancements.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most positive result of this research effort has been the establishment of ongoing communication with the supermarket industry. Through that communication the city has sent the clear message that the City is supportive of markets being located in Cambridge. Operators have indicated that Cambridge is a strong market; they are even willing to be flexible on the size of a store, given the right conditions. This supportive environment has led to a number of supermarkets entering into discussions with owners of suitable sites. Whether these negotiations will lead to new markets is unclear and will largely hinge on whether landowners and supermarket owners can agree on mutually acceptable business terms as well as the outcome of the public processes involved in siting.

The Community Development Department will continue to facilitate the siting of a new store on an appropriate site. We will provide the food industry with additional information on available sites, demographics and other market analysis information. In addition, we have offered assistance in both the public permitting and the community review process. We will work closely with other departments involved in permitting, as well as continue our assistance to the Council on Aging's survey of elders' food transportation needs. We look forward to additional dialogue and collaboration with the City Council on this crucial community issue.

Introduction

This report will examine the food purchase options for the residents of Cambridge. While the focus will be on access to supermarkets, the discussion will also include alternatives to the traditional supermarket as a mechanism for food distribution. This report will identify the value of supermarkets as a food shopping option, and which residents of Cambridge are most underserved by supermarkets. The report will discuss what supermarkets need in order to locate in Cambridge, and what the City can do to bring supermarkets to the underserved areas of the City .Alternative methods of providing access to food will also be discussed. Although this report is generated out of the unsuccessful attempt to site a Super Stop & Shop on Memorial Drive in Cambridgeport, the report will also look at food access throughout the City.

Food Access -Why Supermarkets Are Important

Why are supermarkets important? They are critical parts of a retail food distribution network which runs from convenience and "Mom & Pop" stores to specialty stores, neighborhood markets and supermarkets. Each of these types of stores has a valuable role to fulfill; what distinguishes supermarkets is their ability to provide a greater variety of goods at lower cost. While smaller stores provide a community with walk-in convenience and familiarity, consumers who lack the additional option of supermarket shopping pay higher food prices. For those with lower incomes, these higher prices leave less income available for other necessities, such as housing or child care. A recent study concluded that consumers choose to spend 75% of their food dollars in supermarkets. What supermarkets provide to a neighborhood includes:

<u>lower cost</u> -lower food costs -which allows the consumer to purchase higher quality foods for a given food budget;
<u>variety</u> - the chance to easily buy a wide variety of foods, making it possible to choose a more nutritionally balanced diet that serves the taste and budget of a wide variety of households; and,
<u>convenience</u> - the convenience of a full range of food shopping in one stop, making the higher quality and variety of food selection possible in a relatively shorter amount of time spent shopping.

Supermarkets also make valuable contributions to the community by adding to:
<u>employment</u> -the variety of part-time and entry level jobs within walking distance fill a valuable niche in a comn1unity; and,
<u>neighborhood vitality</u> -by virtue of the aforementioned qualities, supermarkets are often neighborhood meeting places, offering a year-round opportunity for informal social interaction.

What is a Supermarket? – Two Models

How large a space does a supermarket need? In our conversations with developers and supermarket operators, the answer to this became more refined. The large supermarket chains, such as Star Market, maintain that they are not interested in developing supermarkets below 40-45,000 square feet. In fact, the trend has been toward larger 60,000 SF superstores. The 40-45,000 SF store allows them the minimum of variety, low price and convenience they feel their customers expect. Certainly there are stores run by these companies that are smaller -the Star Market on Beacon Street in Somerville is just 20,000 SF. This size is given by some industry experts as the minimum necessary to attain the volume and mix of goods that allow a store to stay competitive on pricing. This does not mean that every operator is willing to develop this size for a new store, however. In our conversations with smaller industry operators, we found a few operators willing to look at opportunities to develop stores that were from 15-20,000 SF in size, with a correspondingly small site requirement. While these stores may not qualify as the standard supermarket, they can often focus on a specific niche market and satisfy its supermarket shopping needs.

For each of these two groups, one needing a three to four acre site to do a 40,000 SF store, and the other needing a 1-2 acre site to do a 15,000 SF store, there would be a corresponding change in automobile and truck traffic impact as well. While most of the issues discussed in this report apply similarly to both of these supermarket models, in some cases, especially in regard to locating adequate sites, the two models have distinctly different requirements.

What is Access to a Supermarket? – Underserved Neighborhoods in Cambridge.

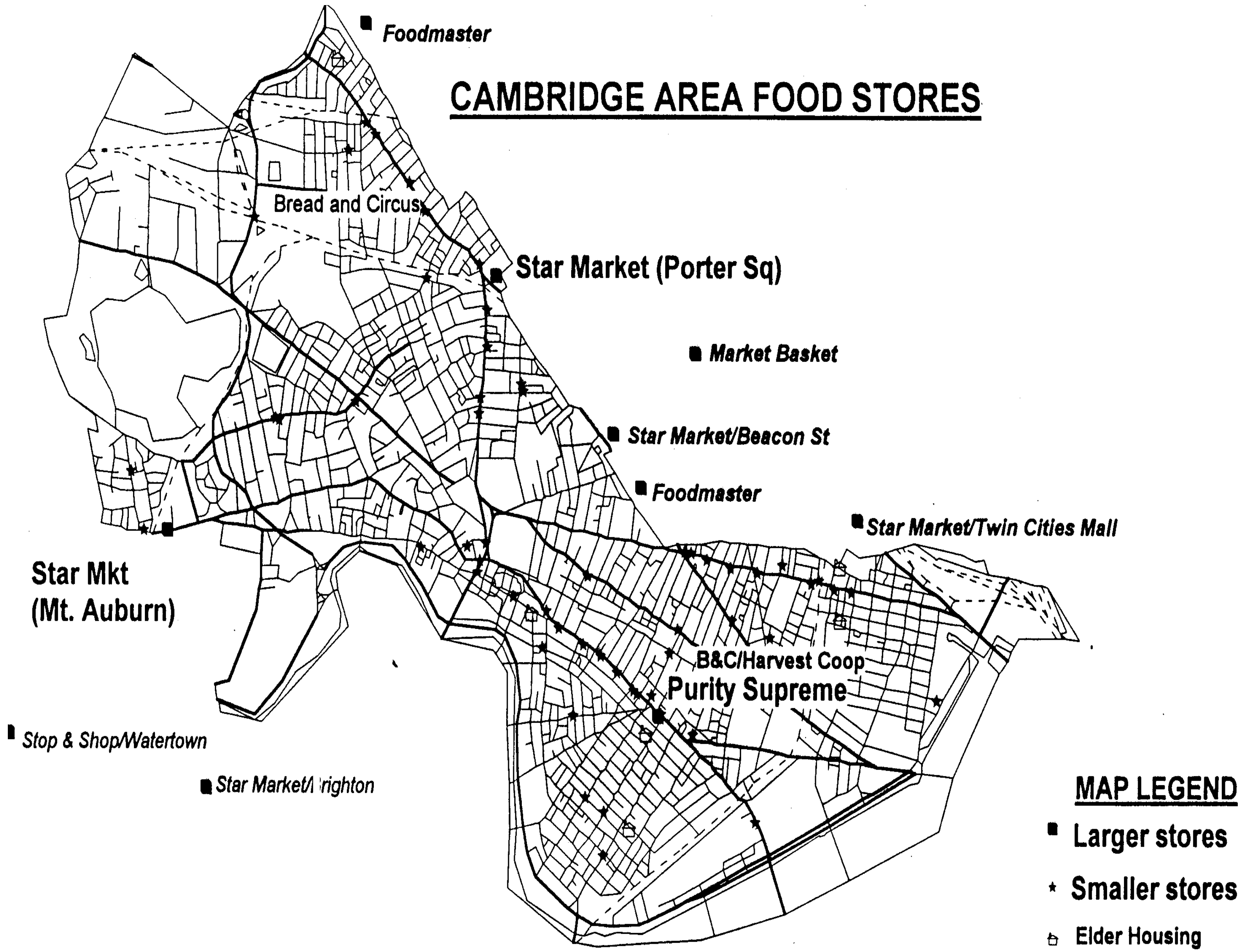
Is Cambridge underserved by supermarkets? Not by the conventional wisdom of supermarket studies, which assume a roughly two mile service radius for an average supermarket. Even after the departure of two Shop & Stop stores, no Cambridge household is located more than two miles from a supermarket, whether the supermarket is in Cambridge, Somerville, Brighton or Watertown (see map #1, Cambridge Area Food Stores). But Cambridge is not a typical community; in more than half of the City's neighborhoods over one quarter of the households have no vehicle (see map #2 Food Store Location and Access to Cars).

Should we expect to be able to walk to a supermarket? As with many other questions, the answer in Cambridge seems to be a bit different than elsewhere. Cambridge, like many large eastern cities, has a high percentage of households without vehicles. It is in scale and design a pedestrian oriented city, with a public transportation system to support that design. Although there are certainly a good number of households with automobiles to travel to supermarkets in the surrounding area, those households without a vehicle must look to other means of transportation to make their weekly shopping trip. Public transit, taxis, relatives and friends all supply a share of transportation to these households (see Map #3 Streets With bus Routes). As with any transportation option, however, there is a cost, whether in terms of money, time, physical effort or social relations. With ice or snow in the winter, safe and convenient passage may become even more of a hardship. For those residents without a car, buying the week's groceries becomes significantly more difficult with the loss of a neighborhood supermarket.

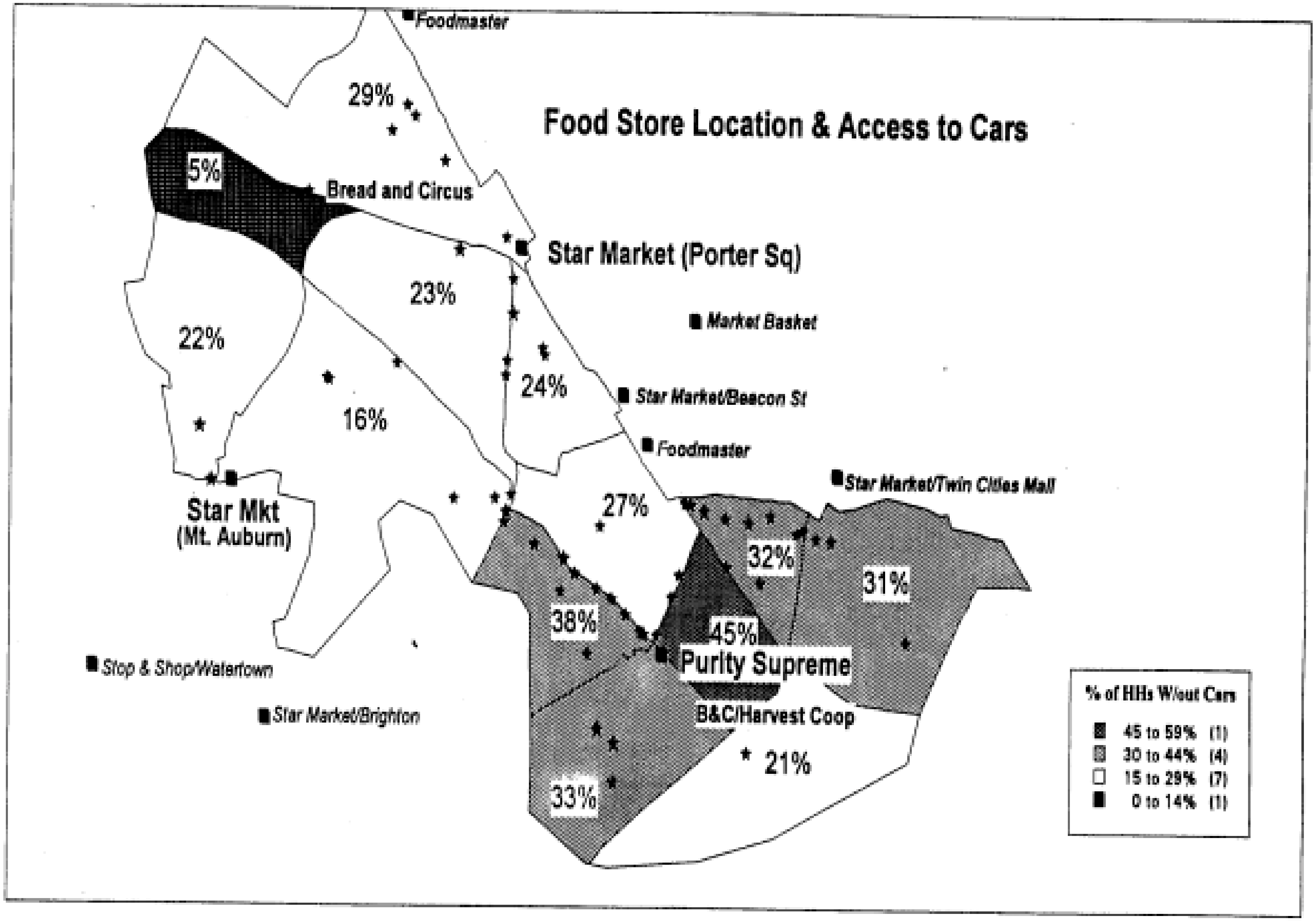
The evaluation of food access is therefore more accurate if we look at the "walking radius" (about one half mile) rather than the suburban driving radius of two miles per store. By this definition, several residential areas with low rates of car ownership are underserved by supermarkets. As can be seen in map #4 Food Store Accessibility by Neighborhood, and the darker areas on map #5 Neighborhoods Underserved by Food Stores, portions of North Cambridge, Mid-Cambridge, Cambridgeport, Riverside and Wellington-Harrington have insufficient supermarket access.

In Mid-Cambridge, the closing of the Broadway Market left a significant portion of the neighborhood without a supermarket within a half mile walk. The approaching replacement of this market with a cluster of food purveyors at the same location should alleviate much of this loss.

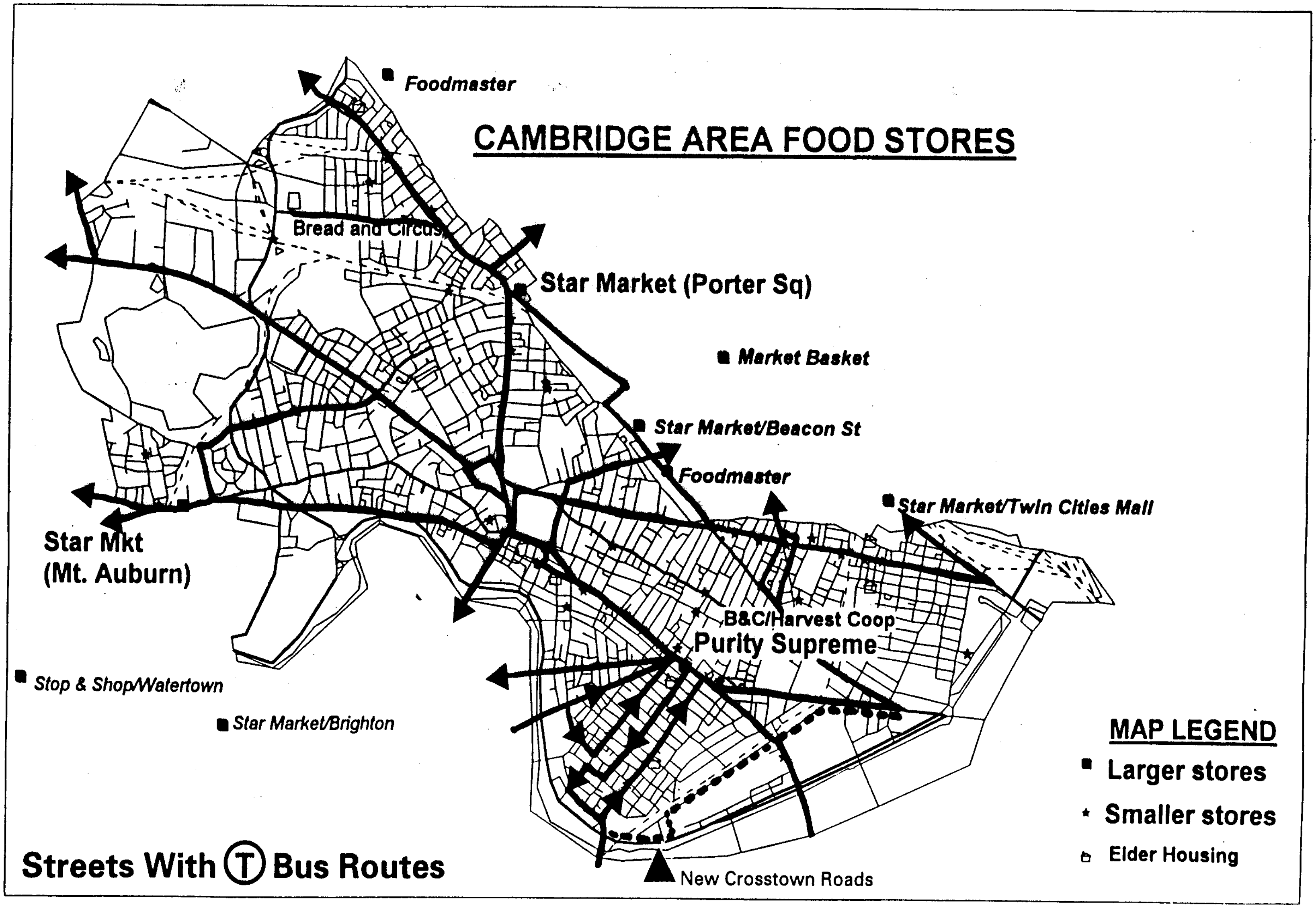
In North Cambridge, the loss of the Stop & Shop in the Fresh Pond Mall left hundreds of families


CAMBRIDGE AREA FOOD STORES
Foodmaster
Bread and Circus
Star Market (Porter Sq)
Market Basket
Star Market/Beacon St
Foodmaster
Star Market/Twin Cities Mall
Star Mkt
(Mt. Auburn)
B&C/Harvest Coop
Purity Supreme
Stop & Shop/Watertown
Star Market/Brighton
MAP LEGEND
Larger stores
Smaller stores
Elder Housing

MAP #1


Food Store Location & Access to Cars
Foodmaster
29%
5%
Bread and Circus
Star Market (Porter Sq)
23%
22%
Market Basket
16%
24%
Star Market/Beacon St
Foodmaster
Star Mkt
(Mt. Auburn)
27%
Star Market/Twin Cities Mall
32%
31%
38%
45%
Purity Supreme
Stop & Shop/Watertown
Star Market/Brighton
B&C/Harvest Coop
21%
33%
% of HHs W/out Cars
45 to 59% (1)
30 to 44% (4)
15 to 29% (7)
0 to 14% (1)

MAP #2


CAMBRIDGE AREA FOOD STORES
Foodmaster
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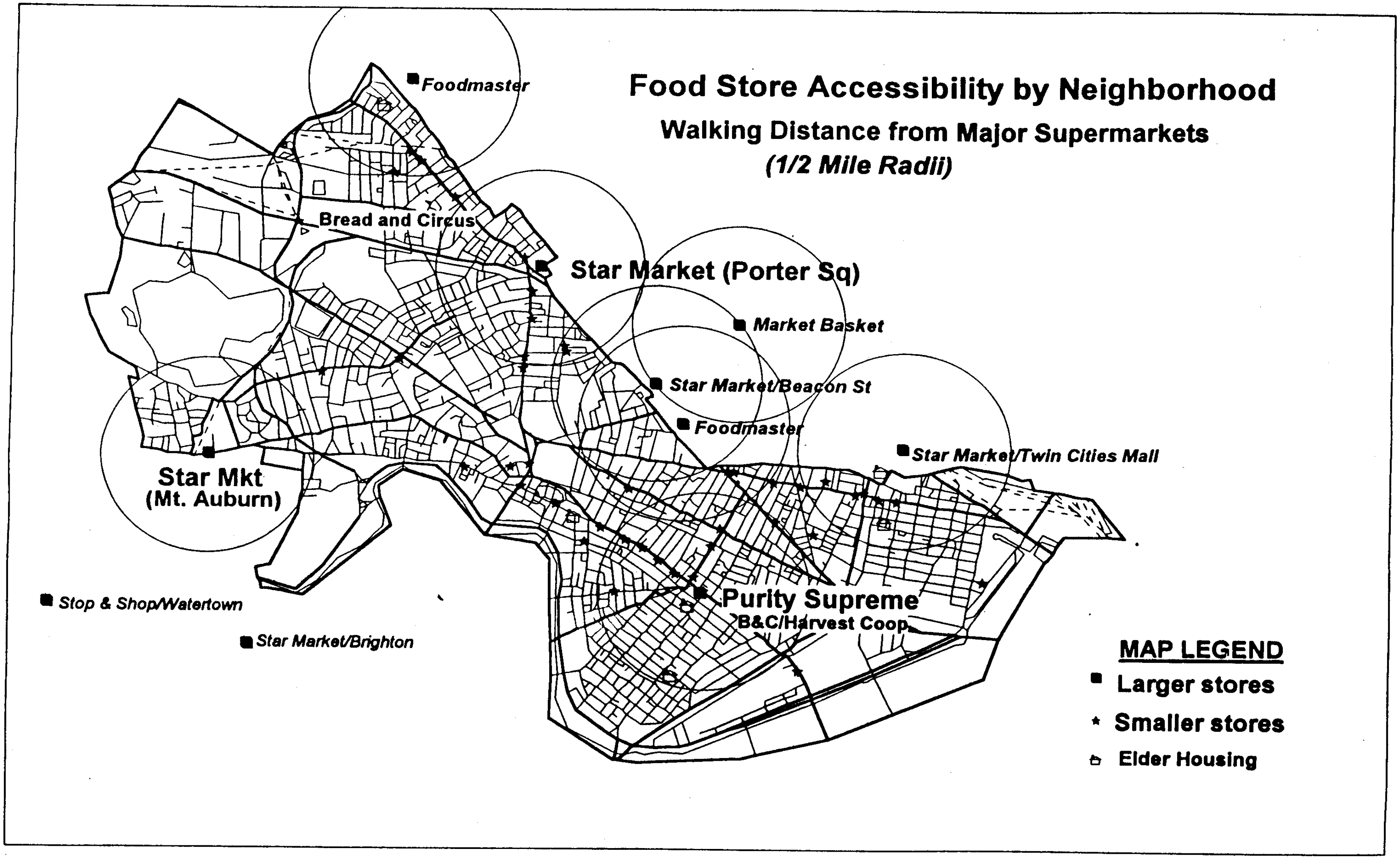
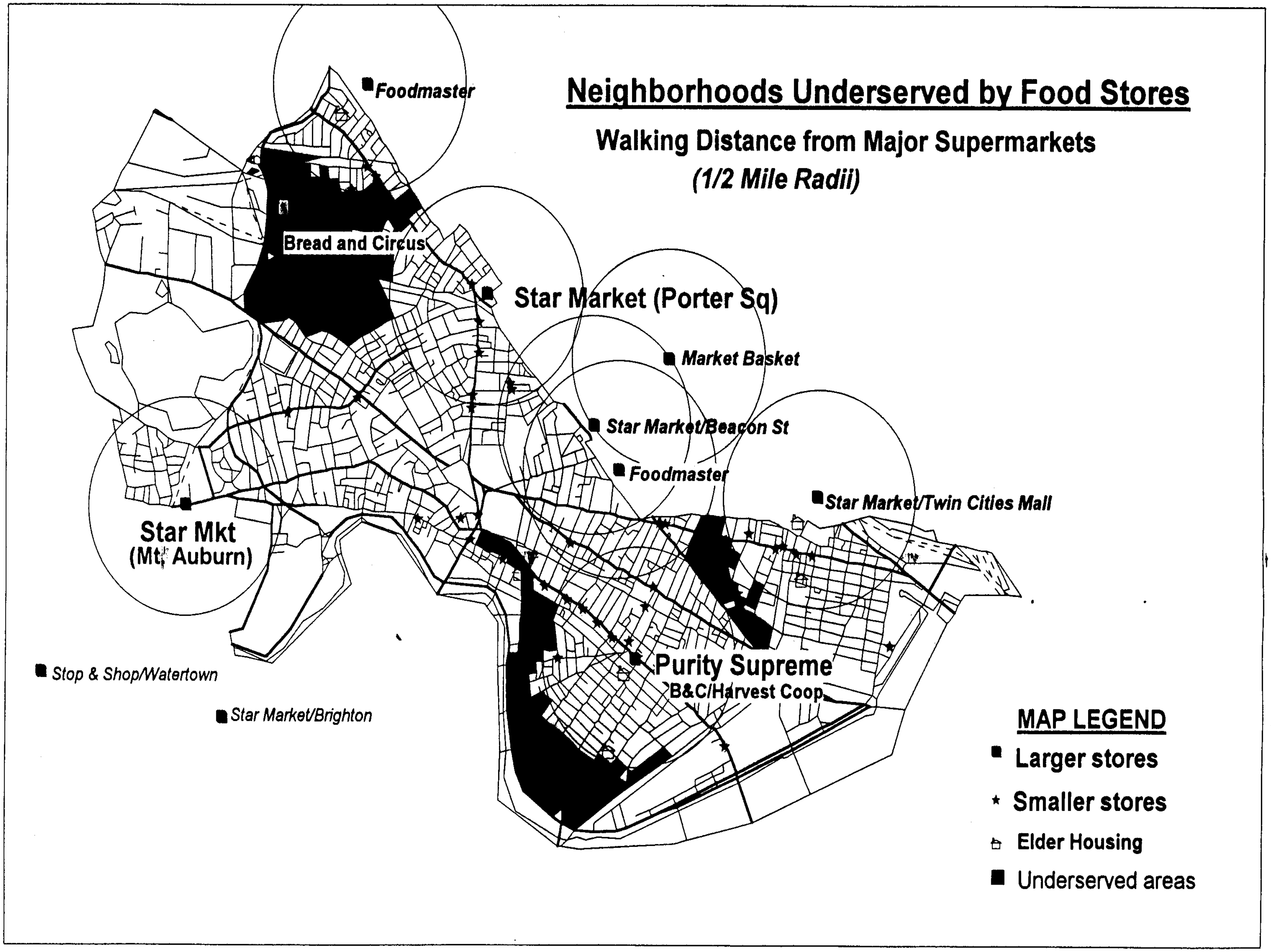
Star Mkt
(Mt. Auburn)
B&C/Harvest Coop
Purity Supreme
Stop & Shop/Watertown
Star Market/Brighton
MAP LEGEND
Larger stores
Smaller stores
Elder Housing
Streets With T Bus Routes
New Crosstown Roads

MAP #3


Food Store Accessibility by Neighborhood
Walking Distance from Major Supermarkets
(1/2 Mile Radii)
Foodmaster
Bread and Circus
Star Market (Porter Sq)
Market Basket
Star Market/Beacon St
Foodmaster
Star Market/Twin Cities Mall
Star Mkt
(Mt. Auburn)
Stop & Shop/Watertown
Star Market/Brighton
Purity Supreme
B&C/Harvest Coop
MAP LEGEND
Larger stores
Smaller stores
Elder Housing

MAP #4


Neighborhoods Underserved by Food Stores
Walking Distance from Major Supermarkets
(1/2 Mile Radii)
Foodmaster
Bread and Circus
Star Market (Porter Sq)
Market Basket
Star Market/Beacon St
Foodmaster
Star Market/Twin Cities Mall
Star Mkt
(Mt. Auburn)
Purity Supreme
B&C/Harvest Coop
Stop & Shop/Watertown
Star Market/Brighton
MAP LEGEND
Larger stores
Smaller stores
Elder Housing
Underserved areas

MAP #5

without a nearby supermarket. The opening of the Bread & Circus supermarket allows these families access to a full supermarket selection, although generally with higher prices (see Appendix G -"Cambridge Market Basket Food Survey"). The competitive prices on staple goods', if combined with the lower priced bulk goods, allows for reasonably priced shopping, but with some loss of the variety and convenience of other supermarkets.

Riverside and Cambridgeport have more recently experienced the loss of their neighborhood supermarket with the closing of the Stop & Shop on Memorial Drive. Residents of these neighborhoods, along with residents in Wellington-Harrington and Area 4 have the highest rates of households without vehicles in the City (see table at right " % *Households without Vehicles".)*

***% of Households without Vehicles*[1]**

Area 4	45%
Riverside	38%
Cambridgeport	33%
Wellington Harrington	32%
East Cambridge	31%
North Cambridge	29%
Mid-Cambridge	27%
Agassiz	24%
Neighborhood 9	23%
Strawberry Hill	22%
Neighborhood 2/MIT	21%
West Cambridge	16%
Cambridge Highlands	5%

1. These percentages are based on U.S. Census percentages for household population, which do not include students in dormitories.

In these neighborhoods, from 25% to 45% of households have no vehicles, and large numbers of households are not within reasonable walking distance of a supermarket. Portions of other neighborhoods also have areas where car ownership rates are low and no markets are nearby (e.g. Neighborhood 9, with 23% of households without vehicles, is only partially served by the Star Market at Porter Square. The Walden Square Apartments and Briston Arms are not within one half mile of that supermarket.)

Although siting a supermarket within 1/2 mile of every household may not be possible in a densely developed city such as Cambridge, there are a variety of ways to improve food access throughout the city. While this report will focus on strategies for attracting a new supermarket to serve those areas identified as underserved, it will also discuss a range of strategies for improving food access in Cambridge, such as working with existing markets or organizing food buying clubs.

What Do Supermarkets Need?

To better understand the concerns of supermarkets that might be interested in locating in Cambridge, C.D.D. staff have spoken with the following enterprises:

Star Market;
Stop & Shop;
SuperValue;
Market of the Americas;
Purity Supreme;
Shaws;
Omni;
Harvest Coop;
Bread & Circus; and,
Pemberton Market.

In addition, a number of developers have been contacted.

The good news is that supermarkets view Cambridge as a very desirable location for a store and concur with the Community Development Department that Cambridge is underserved. A number of supermarkets have used our SiteFinder to locate potential sites. Cambridge's population density and range of incomes are the main contributors to the city's desirability as a supermarket location (see sidebar -*Preliminary Market Analysis).* This means that although Cambridge is like many other urban communities in being somewhat underserved, it is very different from other underserved urban communities, where the market itself is viewed by the supermarket industry as weak.

If Cambridge is viewed as a desirable market, why then is it underserved? Supermarkets are very land-intensive uses. Single story, ground floor layouts enable shoppers to navigate aisles of goods using shopping carts that can not readily go up stairs or elevators. Shoppers prefer to use a car for transportation to accommodate bulky grocery purchases, and large delivery trucks require space to maneuver and unload. These three factors translate into land requirements of an acre or more of land for every 10,000 SF of store. Cambridge has few sites that can accommodate these size requirements. The difficulty of finding a suitable site in Cambridge is compounded by traffic congestion city-wide, which makes proper access another potential barrier, and the difficulty in procuring commercial parking spaces under the parking freeze (see sidebar, *Parking Spaces for Supermarkets).* Siting is also complicated by the City's dense, mixed use physical character, with commercial and residential streets which predate the automobile era. Modem supermarkets, designed for more suburban areas, can be a difficult fit in an urban setting. The impacts of bulky or imposing buildings, increased truck and automobile traffic, and substantial mechanical systems all must be carefully addressed. Lastly, virtually all the potential sites require regulatory relief for siting a supermarket. The failure to site Stop and Shop on Memorial Drive has increased

Preliminary Market Analysis

In some cases, a supermarket may be an obvious need to a neighborhood, but may be an unknown opportunity for supermarket developers. While the Cambridge market is generally well known and considered attractive, there are still specific areas and aspects of the Cambridge market which benefit by a preliminary market analysis which includes basic demographic/income analysis.

Preliminary market analysis of the area formerly served by the Stop & Shop on Memorial Drive also suggests considerable unmet demand. To measure this demand, U.S. Census data were collected on the buying power of residents in the "trade area," or geographic area where customers of a new store are most likely to live. Three areas were examined, including a walking radius of 1/2 mile, a broader (1 mile) area and a traditional shopping radius of two miles. The details of this method and the findings are presented in greater detail in ***Appendix C.*** *Overall, the market analysis yielded these findings:*

1) Consumers in the area represent a substantial market for grocery consumption, ranging from $15 million per year within a walking range (1/2 mile) to $120 million in a two mile range.

2) A new supermarket in Riverside or Cambridgeport could net one third of all grocery purchases within a one half mile radius, or possible more, given the lack of competing stores within a walking radius of the former Stop & Shop and other locations close by.

3) a considerable gap exists between estimated sales of a potential store's competitors in this market and the total buying power of local consumers. This suggests further evidence that a new 20,000 square foot supermarket with annual sales of $7-11 million would likely be supportable in this market.

developers' persistent fears that the regulatory climate in Cambridge is so uncertain and so time consuming that a proposed project risks a rejection after a lengthy and expensive public process.

The supermarket industry is highly competitive, with profit margins for some goods of only pennies on the dollar. While small, neighborhood-based stores compete on the basis of convenience and charge higher prices in order to cover costs, supermarkets compete by selling volume and have, over the last 30 years, increased their size in pursuit of this strategy. A 45,000 SF facility has become the standard for a full size store. Some supermarkets have also adopted a superstore format, where the size extends up to 65,000 SF and other types of services are offered such as dry cleaning, liquor, and eateries. It is believed in the industry that such clustering of activities increases sales, through mutual reinforcement.

Standardization is another strategy the industry has pursued to improve competitive position. Some companies will only build stores of a certain size on a predetermined lot size and will insist on a standard parking ratio, generally 5 spaces per 1,000 SF. With every store the same size and layout, the costs of design, fit-out, and equipment are minimized. Management is simplified because every item is found in exactly the same place in every store and procedures for loading and stocking become uniform.

Parking Spaces for Supermarkets

An important issue for supermarkets, automobile parking is an unusually complex problem for developers in Cambridge. Under the Parking Freeze the City is constrained in the number of new commercial parking spaces it may allow. Thus, if a supermarket developer wants to locate a store on a site that does not presently have parking spaces allotted in the City's inventory of parking spaces, the developer must apply to the Interim Parking Control Committee (IPCC) for spaces from the parking bank. Although a supermarket use is likely to be looked on favorably compared to many other uses - the large number of spaces requires a substantial allocation from the parking bank, and places another regulatory hurdle in the path of supermarket development. The number of spaces which are presently allotted to a specific site is noted in the site summaries.

While this approach is indeed very efficient, it presents problems for a community like Cambridge. The cookie cutter model may work well in suburban communities with large tracts of available land and high levels of car ownership; it does not mesh well with the reality of scarce land, crowded arterial streets and wa1k-in shoppers found in Cambridge. Fortunately, the C.D.D. staff has been able to locate both supermarkets and developers who are willing to explore the development of a more customized approach to solving Cambridge's shopping needs, including reducing store size to the 15-20,000 SF range and working to reduce the amount of parking required. The major impediment to action is an appropriate site.

Addressing the Needs
Potential Supermarket Sites

There is no easily identified site in Cambridge which can supply the required minimum characteristics for a standard supermarket site: four acres on reasonable and acceptable transportation routes. Two acre sites which may be able to serve those supermarket operators willing to develop at 15 -20,000 SF are also in short supply. The "sites" which are discussed on the following pages (see Appendix A) are located in areas of Cambridge we have identified as being underserved. However, these "sites" are not necessarily available for sale, or under one ownership, and we do not represent that they are for sale. Certainly a large site could theoretically be assembled in many areas of Cambridge, given a sufficient time and money. However, this report does not speculate on such assemblages. Included in Appendix A is a site analysis of these potential sites for the development of a supermarket to serve the residential areas which have been identified as having more than 25% of the households without vehicles.

The sites discussed are the following, by neighborhood:

Riverside-Cambridgeport
- Elbery Ford/CELCO -326 River Street
- Grower's Market -870 Memorial Drive
- Stop & Shop -727 Memorial Drive
- Pat's Tow -32 Pacific Street
- Danica Building -117 Sidney

East Cambridge/ Neighborhood 3 & 4
- Linpro -208 Broadway

North Cambridge
- Patapanian -324 Rindge Ave.
- Martignetti -205 Concord Turnpike
- W .R. Grace -One Alewife Center
- Nahigian -2225 Mass. Ave.

The site analysis includes the following areas of information for each site discussed:

- Site information
- Site conditions
- Applicable zoning, map
- Availability
- Neighborhood Character
- Service area, with map;
- Transportation

There is no one site which stands out as a perfect supermarket site in this group, although each site would serve a significant portion of a neighborhood we have identified as underserved. Looking at the size of the lot, the minimum of four acres for a standard supermarket is satisfied by all of the sites except the Danica, Linpro, and Nahigian sites. Parking spaces in reasonable supermarket quantity exist at just a few sites: Stop & Shop; University Park; Pat's Tow and W.R. Grace. A number of the sites are well located for automobile and truck access, including Elbery Ford, Growers Market, Pat's Tow, University Park, Linpro, Patapanian and Martignetti. Those sites which most directly serve an underserved neighborhood include Elbery Ford, Stop & Shop, Linpro, Patapanian, and W .R. Grace.

<u>Regulatory Certainty</u>

The two most mentioned industry concerns about siting a supermarket in Cambridge were the lack of a suitable site and the uncertainty in negotiating through the required permitting process. Supermarkets, like any other commercial building, are subject to the regulatory requirements of the local zoning code, as well as any other regulatory requirements arising from such issues as environmental protection (supermarkets are often of the size that triggers an Environmental Notification Form to be filed with the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency (MEP A). While many regulatory requirements are not subject to local modification, the local zoning ordinance is one area where a municipality may give regulatory priority to a specific use. Supermarket developers hoping to locate in the city can presently benefit from assistance with the regulatory requirements in the form of:

-assistance with the permitting process;
-assistance with public participation throughout planning and construction;
-design and planning consultation with affected parties.

During this process, other aspects of the proposal may be modified to better serve the needs of the community; with the provision of local knowledge important aspects of such decisions as product mix, hours of operation, or employee recruitment may be influenced. However, if added support for siting supermarkets is desired the following discussion of techniques of regulatory relief through the zoning ordinance and associated issues may be considered.

General Zoning Approaches to Facilitate the Siting of Supermarkets

Supermarkets as they have generally evolved into their contemporary physical form pose a number of regulatory concerns when they are proposed to be sited in the Cambridge context. The more closely located in residential neighborhoods and traditional commercial districts, developed in an earlier non auto age, the more challenging the siting becomes.

<u>Building Form.</u> New buildings tend to be bulky, square structures with mostly undifferentiated, undecorated walls. While not exceptionally tall, averaging perhaps 15 -25 feet in height, the blankness of the walls, even at a modest height, can be very imposing without adequate setbacks. In Cambridge, in districts that determine building setback by a formula, long walls can generate setback requirements that make siting of a building impractical or reduce the efficiency of the development site.

<u>Vehicular Traffic.</u> For delivery of goods and customers alike, the contemporary supermarket is dependent on trucks and cars; both vastly increase the size of an ideal site in relation to the size of the building constructed. Except in quite unique circumstances the development is invariable quite "suburban" in character. Both the truck and the auto traffic generated by a site are among the most intrusive aspects of a supermarket development on adjacent residential neighborhoods. The less a site is served by arterial roads, the more negative its impact is on neighborhoods. fu general, market demands would mandate more parking spaces to serve a supermarket than the Cambridge zoning ordinance would require, even in the City's least dense, most "suburban" business districts. Trucks are an increasingly problematic issue as their size increases in response to market forces, as well as because "of the frequency of their arrival at a site.

<u>Secondary Impacts.</u> An increasingly large array of mechanical equipment, which can be intrusive both visually and as a result of noise generated, and the systems necessary to manage the volume of waste produced at a site can both intrude on the surrounding community if not very carefully handled. Issues not always directly handled by the zoning ordinance, they are the secondary elements of a development that even careful site review may overlook or inadequately control.

The following list of possible zoning approaches would each improve the chances of siting a supermarket in Cambridge, but also involve corresponding advantages and disadvantages that must be carefully considered.

1. Develop Special Grocery Store Regulations

a. A new grocery store category may be created in the Table of Use Regulations.

Advantages: Use is defined separately from other retail sale of goods activities, the general use category in which supermarkets are now located. Separately listed the use can then be separately regulated.

Disadvantages: None. This approach allows greater flexibility in regulating the supermarket use; however the use could still be regulated exactly as it is now, if desired.

b. That supermarket use may be allowed in a wide range of districts including those, like all office districts and some industrial districts, where general retail use currently is not allowed, or restricted.

Advantages: Supermarkets are permitted in any desired district without allowing a much wider range of retail activities to which the city may not wish to give special encouragement.

Disadvantages: Depending on the details of the regulations, a grocery store might be allowed in an area where it would not be an asset.

c. Alternately, or in combination with a. above, special regulations might be developed for grocery stores, similar to the special regulations that apply to fast order food establishments in the zoning ordinance.

(1) Acceptable physical parameters might be defined that would permit the siting of a supermarket as-of-right (eliminating the need for variances or special permits) in some or all locations. Special sign regulations could be developed and as well as other controlled aspects of the development (e.g. setbacks perhaps where they are determined by formula, reduction of parking requirements) if an acceptable set of standards could be agreed upon;

Advantages: A facility could be sited with relative ease without the delays and exposure that variances and/or special permits entail.

Disadvantages: Defining the parameters that can truly protect the public and abutters in all cases, without public review. is very difficult, given the potential external effects of such a facility on its neighbors. There is always the possibility that a facility could be sited where it is not wanted or needed; or that reasonable standards cannot account for the variability of site characteristics.

or

(2) Special parameters can be defined but a special permit required to approve the development or the site plan.

Advantages: Public review of the development is assured.

Disadvantages: The time delay and uncertainty of any public process introduced.

2. Transfer of Development Rights

As supermarkets tend to be land intensive, they are likely to make full use of a site without employing all or even most of the gross floor area available to the site in all but the lowest density zoning districts. Additional development on the site might, however, be hampered by the site utilization of the supermarket. To permit the realization of the monetary value of that unused potential, a transfer of the remaining, unused gross floor area could be allowed to some other site, most reasonably by special permit.

Advantages: The technique allows greater flexibility in utilizing the development potential of a site.

Disadvantages: A number of complications immediately arise: (1) *the uncertainty with regard to any potential market for such transferable gross floor area.* (2) *the difficulty in developing the details of the mechanism: the location of donating and receiving sites. the maximum buildup of F AR allowed. etc..* (3) *the potential to negatively impact the abutters to any receiving site. and* (4) *the complications of any special permit public hearing process.*

3. Exclusion from Gross Floor Area Calculation

On some sites or in some zoning districts, other development might be possible even with the siting of a grocery store. In such circumstances an incentive might be provided to encourage the location of such a store by exempting its gross floor area from inclusion within the FAR limit applicable to the site. Such an approach might be particularly effective where there is a limit on the amount of retail permitted, as in the IC PUD District in Alewife and in the Cambridgeport Revitalization Development District at University Park.

Advantages: The approach is simple and straightforward and does not involve the complication of multiple sites or multiple owners.

Disadvantages: The potential exists that too much development might be allowed on a site; or that in some districts where certain kinds of uses are restricted (e.g. University Park. Alewife Center PUD) those limits might be circumvented in ways that are contrary to the intent of the specific district regulations.

4. A Grocery Store Overlay District

To limit the scope and applicability of any of the techniques outlined in 1 -3 above, they might be combined with a zoning overlay district that would be applied to several likely locations within the city, predetermined to be acceptable.

Advantages: The special advantages granted to supermarkets could be limited and targeted to specific sites, and not necessarily granted uniformly at every location where a zoning district. or districts, is located on the zoning map.

Disadvantages: Likely sites must to be identified in advance; a site that is primed for supermarket development might be overlooked with resulting delays.

5. Site and/or Development Specific Rezonings, or Variances

a. Desirable or likely sites can be rezoned to a zoning district that would permit the desired supermarket use at locations where an existing district does not.

Advantages: Simple and straightforward.

Disadvantages: Other, less desired uses might be permitted or dimensional aspects not desired may be allowed.

b. Specific use and/or other variances can be issued for a specific development proposal, as necessary.

Advantages: Tight control can be maintained over all aspects of the development.

Disadvantages: The time delay and uncertainty of any public process is a major disadvantage, abutters can thwart development in most cases should they object, as variances in many circumstances are frequently difficult to justify legally.

Regulating Size

For any of the above zoning approaches it would be possible to set up the regulations so that one approach might be selected for smaller facilities (e.g. less than 40,000 s.f.) with a second approach for supermarkets above that amount. This would make it possible to encourage facilities which are moderately sized, and allow more careful regulation of developments which may be at a regional scale.

Active Participation in New Supermarket Development

Although only one supermarket contacted by the C.D.D. has indicated a need for assistance with financing, the major options for public financial participation in a supermarket development are outlined below. A number of quasi-public agencies have financing programs that could potentially assist in the financing of a supermarket in Cambridge. The Massachusetts Industrial Finance Authority and the Massachusetts Government Land Bank are the two most likely in-state sources of financing. The supermarket would make application directly to these agencies and approval would be contingent on the financial strength of the applicant and the deal. The three programs outlined below are programs which require the cooperation of the developer and the city, and in the case of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation program "The Retail Initiative", a non-profit developer as well. An additional option for active participation, land taking, is also noted in this section, and detailed in Appendix B.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 108 Program

The HUD 108 program enables the City to borrow against it's future CDBG entitlement to obtain funds which can serve as a loan or guarantee for economic development projects. HUD sells bonds to raise the funds which are made available to communities. Qualifying economic development projects must meet one of the two national objectives established for the CDBG program: elimination of slums and blight or serving the needs of low/moderate income people. If a loan defaults the community's obligation to repay HUD remains and future CDBG funds can be retained by HUD to meet Section 108 obligations. The HUD 108 program requires a complex and staff intensive approval process which is outlined below. Because of the complexity and level of staff commitment required, and length of time to disbursement, this program is most appropriate for needs in the million dollar range and as a last resort.

HUD Section 108 Application Process

1. Block grant hearing to amend program statement.
2. Public hearing.
3. HUD review and authorization of application.
4. Environmental review: request release of funds.
5. HUD approval of terms and conformity with national objectives.
6. Council approves appropriation and loan order.
7. Contract & commitment letter signed
8. Closing of loan and disbursement to applicant.
9. Drawdown from HUD to C.D.D..

Chapter l2lA Property Tax Agreement

Chapter 121A of the Massachusetts General Laws enables communities to offer property tax abatements to property owners seeking to develop property in areas where blighted, decadent, or substandard conditions have been found to exist. Cambridge has used this ability only once for commercial development, for the Biogen building in Kendall Square. The process for a 121A Tax Agreement is complex and staff intensive, and incurs substantial legal costs. An approval could be expected to take six months at a minimum. Because of the cost and policy issues involved in abating taxes, building sizes below 100,000 square feet may not be appropriate for tax abatements. In addition, if 100% union labor is required by the City Council for approval of a 121A project, then the advantage of a 121A approach becomes less desirable to the developer. The process follows:

1. Applicant prepares an agreement of association to form a Massachusetts corporation.
2. Applicants file application with Executive office of Communities and Development.
3. EOCD sends the application to the City Manager. The City Manager sends the application to the Planning Board and the City Council, which must hold a joint hearing within 45 days.
4. A joint hearing is held.
5. After the hearing the Planning Board must make findings as specified in the statute.
6. The Planning Board submits a report to the City Council within 45 days of the hearing and within 90 days of the hearing the Council sends its report to the City Manager.
7. The City Manager transmits the report of the Planning Board and the Council to EOCD.
8. If the City Manager and the Council approve, EOCD may also approve and issue a certificate consenting to filing the agreement of association to form a corporation with the Secretary of State.
9. The City Manager is authorized to enter into a contract to carry out the project and providing for amounts of excise tax payment.

<u>LISC -The Retail Initiative</u>

To support the development of supermarkets in urban neighborhoods which are underserved by large supermarket chains, The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) organized The Retail Initiative (TRI) this past year. This program is designed to invest funds through non-profit community development corporations from corporate investors in projects which develop new sites which are leased by the non-profit organization to free-standing supermarkets or retail centers anchored by supermarkets. There are specific program targets/requirements, including:

The minimum supermarket size is 40,000 square feet;
The market must be a known chain, or work with a known wholesaler;
LISC will come into the project as financial partner/investor for institutional investors;
LISC will invest in 20-30% of the total project costs;
-looking for a 13% internal rate of return (IRR), 10% annual cash return
If there is other retail, the core tenants must be 75% of project. Other core tenants, in addition to a supermarket, may include a bank or drugstore.

While this program is intended for distressed urban communities which may have experienced longstanding disinvestment by supermarkets, the program may consider a project in Cambridge which meet the appropriate targets as noted above. As with any supermarket development, the biggest hurdle is finding a suitable site.

<u>Land Taking For a Supermarket</u>

Given the attractiveness of the Cambridge market, supermarket operators have not requested financial assistance in procuring a site. However, according to the City Solicitor (see opinion in Appendix B "Eminent Domain Taking for Supermarket" November 8, 1994), it may be possible that if property were taken by eminent domain by the City of Cambridge and then leased to a private company to be operated as a supermarket a court could find that the taking was for a public purpose. Such an action, though, still brings up a question of a possibly enormous expenditure for the cost of the land.

Alternative Means of Serving Underserved Households

While our primary focus in this report has been on attracting a new supermarket, there are alternate means for increasing food access for underserved residents. Among the models of alternate food distribution discussed below are food cooperatives (such as the Harvest Cooperative Supermarket) and food buying clubs. By operating as non-profit businesses, both of these models can often provide lower food prices. Access can also be improved via transportation aids such as delivery services, shuttle services, taxicabs and carpooling. Currently, the Department of Human Service Programs, as well as Stop and Shop, provide some shuttle service for elders to area grocery stores. Finally, techniques for improving service are suggested. These include forming resident committees to work with store operators to improve product mix, increase community outreach, and provide consistent communication from customers to the operator.

Food Cooperatives, such as the Harvest Food Coop in Central Square, provide low prices and input into store operation to members in exchange for member participation in the operation of the market. The participation may come in many forms, from an actual work contribution, such as stocking shelves, to a small financial contribution. With full participation in the Coop member discounts may be as much as 20% lower than supermarket prices.

Food Buying Clubs -The Northeast Association of Food Cooperatives, located in Brattleboro, Vennont sells food (although not fresh foods) to food cooperatives (such as Harvest Cooperative) and food buying clubs throughout the region. The Association will also help groups of people organize and operate food buying clubs, and have a range of materials (see Appendix E -Food Buying Clubs) which help a startup group organize everything from the first meeting to ordering and taking delivery of the food. A food buying club may be two people or two hundred.

Public Market -Public markets typically provide a year-round indoor setting for a wide variety of small retail booths, which may provide any variety of food items as well as other retail goods, typically those which lend themselves to small-scale operations, such as crafts or specialized goods and services. These markets are often located at a site which were typically terminal markets for food distributors, and often use an out-of-use warehouse-type building for its site. A well known example is Seattle's Pike's Market. While these markets are often seen primarily as a source of economic development and retail vitality rather than food access, some, such as Hartford's, have grown to be valued for the variety of foods they make available. The Hartford Public Market provides a space for the farmer's market to operate four days per week. The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture operates a food voucher program for those with low incomes to purchase food at farmer's markets.

Transportation Service -The Council on Aging provides shopping van service to a number of areas of the city. Stop & Shop is providing shuttle service from a few housing locations in their former service area to the Stop & Shop store in Watertown (For full discussion of transportation services, see memo from Department of Human Services of November 1, 1994 in Appendix F).

Delivery Service -One of the obstacles to food access for many residents is the difficulty in transporting heavy bags of groceries home after shopping. In the winter, such a trip may be almost impossible given the difficulty of negotiating snowy sidewalks. A basic delivery service, where the customer goes to the store, picks out and pays for the food, but has the food delivered by a vehicle, allows for those without cars to shop at supermarkets regardless of the weather, and with somewhat less concern for the distance of the walk. A delivery service which also picks out the food allows either the very busy or the infirm to shop from home, and pay for the groceries upon delivery. The only delivery services available from supermarkets are operated not by the store, but by private operators. Delivery costs are typically from $5-$10. Often the cost of a taxi is not much higher than the delivery cost, so customers will often decide to take a taxi home from the store at about the same cost as a delivery service. Often smaller neighborhood markets will deliver under specific conditions. Using an order/delivery service may also be less satisfactory socially for the many people who enjoy the interaction and neighborhood communication a supermarket often supports. Another casualty of a phone ordering and delivery service would be the opportunity to examine and" select brands in the true convenience of the supermarket. While future virtual-market home ordering systems promise to eliminate one of these problems, by allowing customers to "walk" down the supermarket aisles, pick up, examine and replace or select any item in the store, they are not presently an available. A computer based ordering system for home delivery is planned for use at the Star Market on Mt. Auburn Street.

Very low income persons with disabilities are eligible for monthly delivery of canned and other nonperishable goods from local food pantries. The service, known as "Project Soup," is available to Cambridge and Somerville residents who are income-eligible for food pantries, Medicaid or fuel assistance programs (generally up to 150 or 175% of poverty.) For more information contact Jesse Pacini at Project Soup, 776-5931.

<u>Improve Existing Supermarkets</u>

Residential areas viewed as "underserved" by supermarkets generally face two kinds of problems:

1) Inadequate <u>access</u> to food stores, and

2) Inadequate <u>service</u> by existing food stores.

While this report has focused primarily on the problem of insufficient access, poor service is a problem for consumers in many lower income American communities. Existing supermarkets are often situated on sites that a community has almost grown up or evolved around, so that those who are most in need of a walking distance supermarket have indeed selected their housing based partly on the access to a nearby market. Therefore, it is certainly worth investing extra energy in seeing if such an existing market can be persuaded to continue to serve or improve its service to the neighborhood around it.

Techniques for improving the service of an existing supermarket may include:

Forming a small resident committee to work with the operator to:
-receive complaints
-monitor responses
-make suggestions

The value to an operator of improved contact with neighborhood interests and concerns includes: a better understanding of the demographics of the neighborhood, so that foods which are more likely to sell may be increased; an understanding of service needs, so that hours may be tailored to fit the shopping patterns of the specific neighborhood; and, the possibility of improvements in such areas as hiring local residents.

<u>Employee ownership</u>

Alternative forms of developing and/or owning food stores offer interesting models for improving food access to underserved residents. Community or worker-owners help to keep profits, circulating within the community, rather than being exported. Employee owners have at times demonstrated greater productivity, given their direct financial stake in the store's success. As with consumer owned cooperatives, these socially motivated organizations may be more willing than traditional stores to locate or remain in lower income communities. In *some* cases employees or community organizations have provided the means to develop or retain a grocery store in inner city areas .In Philadelphia, for instance, unionized supermarket workers bought out six A&P grocery stores which were closing down. They were assisted by nonprofit consultants (PACE) and community based organizations. Despite a high level of commitment by employee-owners, all but one of the stores have failed, due to poor management, increased competition and inadequate financing. Elsewhere, three stores of the Peck's chain near Scranton, PA, are 100% worker owned and now operating successfully.

Strategies Adopted To Improve Food Access

A number of city governments and community organizations have taken an active role in siting or developing supermarkets. In many cases their experiences cannot be applied directly to Cambridge, given higher poverty rates, crime problems and levels of physical deterioration in some of the other communities. One overall lesson emerges, however: communities can play an effective role in recruiting or developing a supermarket. Critical to store success was cooperation: from both store managers who were sensitive to community needs, and from local government, residents and non-profit organizations. Local governments have provided assistance ranging from financial aid and land acquisition to technical assistance. Residents provide advocacy for development of supermarkets and information on the food needs of the community. Community based non-profit developers offer strong management and development skills. In general, a high level of public incentives is necessary in markets perceived as weak or risky by the supermarket industry .

Examples of community sponsored supermarkets:

<u>Boston. MA</u>

Dorchester (Upham's Corner): America's Food Basket. This 12,000 SF market is located in a racially and economically diverse neighborhood, features ethnic specialty foods from Africa, Central America and other areas as well as general goods. The store operators have also cooperated with the city through its efforts to hire and train neighborhood residents. The site was occupied previously by a market which had closed.

Jamaica Plain: Purity Supreme. This development was a successful partnership of the PFD, community based developers (JP Neighborhood Development Corporation), Children's Hospital and private operators, with the support of area residents, including the neighborhood council and tenants from Bromley Heath, a Boston Housing Authority development. The development, on city owned land, pairs a 40,000 square foot supermarket with a neighborhood health center.

Roslindale Main Street Cooperative Market: This small, cooperatively owned store (7,000 SF retail area) is slated for construction on the site vacated by a Kellehers grocery in Roslindale Village. Members of the Village board mounted a very effective fund drive from residents, banks, city government and other sources to make this store possible. The city assisted them in gaining control of the site and financing the project. It is viewed as a critical part of Roslindale's commercial revitalization.

Cambridge, MA

When the Broadway Market in Mid-Cambridge closed in 1991, the loss was felt not only as a source of food shopping for Mid-Cambridge, but also as a neighborhood meeting place. A "Request For Proposals" (RFP) was developed by the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association with the assistance of the Cambridge Community Development Department to find an alternative food service facility for the abandoned location. According to the developer, the idea of the market hall which is now being installed at the site grew out of the RFP , which was shown to him while looking at the site as a potential space for a deli/fish market.

Newark N.J.

For almost 25 years there was no supermarket in Newark's Central Ward, poorest and most densely populated of Newark neighborhoods. The New Community Corporation (NCC) began developing plans in 1980 to establish a shopping center in the Central Ward. NCC teamed up with Supermarkets General, the parent company of Pathmark. Supermarkets General had just had a similar project, working with a non-profit in Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York to develop a 140,000 square foot shopping center anchored by a 26,000 square foot Pathmark. After a 10 year struggle to assemble the land and secure financing, the New Community Shopping Center, anchored by a 43,000 square foot Pathmark opened in 1990. Factors in the success of this project include a committed and experienced non-profit developer, substantial community support for the project and the strong sales potential of 93,000 underserved residents of the Central Ward.

Hartford. CT

In 1984 the Hartford City Council awarded a contract to the Hartford Food System for a study of the city's food retailing economy. This 1986 report made a number of recommendations to the city, including establishing an association of small food retailers, building small (7,000 -10,000 square feet) markets, and establishing stronger working relationships with the supermarket operators. According to Mark Winne, present Director of the Hartford Food System, the first store built in Hartford in thirty years has just been completed, a Super Stop & Shop, located on the edge of Hartford. Mr. Winne is not convinced that increased attention to supermarkets by the city played a part in this particular siting.

Mr. Winne also stated that an association of small food retailers, intended to secure supermarket prices for small markets, was difficult to keep operating, although it periodically was able to attain lower prices for its members. However, he noted that one improvement in the food retailing climate in Hartford has come about from the addition of a six day a week public market in the center of Hartford, with a farmer's market at that site four days per week. The market provides a wider range of shopping choices in Hartford and acts as an economic incubator for the many small operators (food and non-food) who locate in the booths.

Conclusions for Cambridge

Perhaps the most positive result of the research process has been the establishment of ongoing communication with the supermarket industry coupled with the clear message that the City Council and administration are supportive of markets being located in the City. Operators have conveyed the view that Cambridge is a strong market. Operators are willing to be flexible on the size of store, given the right conditions -standard supermarket operators are willing to look at developing stores as small as 40,000 *SF,* and stores as small as 15-20,000 square feet are considered as possibilities by a few operators, along with correspondingly small sites, as small as 1 -2 acres. This communication has led to a number of supermarkets entering into discussions with owners of sites. Whether these negotiations will lead to new markets is unclear and will largely hinge on whether landowners and supermarket owner can agree on mutually acceptable business terms as well as the outcome of the public processes involved in siting.

The key areas that supermarkets expressed a need for assistance are the location of available sites and a clearer path through the regulatory requirements. The Department will continue to facilitate the siting of a new store on an appropriate site. Its staff will provide the food industry with additional information on available sites, demographics and other market analysis information. In addition, we have offered assistance in both the public permitting and the community review process. We will work closely with other Departments involved in permitting, as well as continue our assistance with the Council on Aging's survey of elders' food transportation needs. The following recommendations should maintain the progress already made, and advance the city to the next steps towards food access in all Cambridge neighborhoods:

Ongoing Recommendations

1. Maintain active contact between Community Development Department and supermarket operators. Continue to provide technical assistance to supermarkets through provision of demographic information, information about regulatory and neighborhood process;

2. Establish a site availability report specifically aimed at supermarkets, similar to the SiteFinder for commercial property presently available through Community Development;

3. Evaluate suggestions related to zoning and public incentives.

4. Continue transportation programs currently in place, and evaluate elderly transportation needs throughout City;

5. Offer computerized food shopping and delivery service through Cambridge library computer systems;

6. Make materials available on establishing Food Buying Clubs with Northeast Cooperatives;

7. Provide additional support to food buying clubs -such support might include educational materials, language translations, or temporary storage space;